



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Hepatitis A

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis (hep-ah-TY-tiss) A is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus, which is found in the stool of an infected person. Vaccines can stop this from happening and hepatitis A virus is not found in animals. Hepatitis A does not usually cause long-term liver damage or death.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Symptoms usually begin 28-30 days (range of 15-50 days) after exposure and usually last less than 2 months. People can spread it to others from about 2 weeks before symptoms begin until 2 weeks after. Some people, especially children, may have no symptoms, but can still spread the virus to others. Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tiredness
- Stomach pain
- Fever
- Dark urine
- Pale, clay-colored stool
- Joint Pain
- Loss of appetite
- Yellowing of skin and eyeballs (jaundice)

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A virus is passed in the stool and people become sick by having contact with the stool of an infected person (fecal-oral route). For this reason, the virus is more easily spread in areas where there are poor sanitary conditions or where good

personal hygiene is not common. Every day contact, as in what normally happens at work or school, does not spread the illness.

Who is at risk for getting hepatitis A?

Anyone can become ill, but young children, older adults, pregnant women, and immune suppressed individuals (such as patients on cancer drugs and with organ transplants) are more likely to get sick. People are at risk for hepatitis A infection if they:

- Travel to countries where hepatitis A is common and where there is little clean water or proper waste removal.
- Drink or swallow untreated water.
- Eat food prepared by a person who has the illness.
- Eat raw produce or raw shellfish (e.g., oysters).
- Touch the stool or blood of a person who has the illness.
- Work with monkeys.

How do I know if I have hepatitis A?

A person having diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours or have jaundice should see a doctor right away. The health care provider may take a blood sample to test for hepatitis A.

How is hepatitis A treated?

There is no treatment for hepatitis A other than treating symptoms. People who have had hepatitis A get lifelong immunity and cannot get hepatitis A again.

How is hepatitis A prevented?

Usually, hepatitis A can be prevented by closely following the guidelines below:

- Get vaccinated for hepatitis A (Two-dose series).
- Wash hands with soap and water after using the restroom; after swimming; and before, during, and after food preparation.
- Wash all produce before eating raw or cooking.
- Use treated water for washing, cooking, and drinking.
- Do not change diapers near recreational water.
- When traveling outside the United States, drink bottled drinks, do not eat uncooked produce unless you peel them yourself, do not eat foods or drinks from street vendors, and do not drink or eat local water or ice.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/index.htm>.

Food and Drug Administration, Food Facts for Consumers:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm077286.htm>

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